

## The Structure of Mikasuki Selfhood

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The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the three set pronoun system of Mikasuki and other Muskogean languages cannot be adequately described in terms of the commonly used linguistic categories of agent, patient, and dative. Such categories, when applied, have only produced generalizations which tend to work some of the time and not all of the time. Knowing what pronoun set should collocate with a particular verb in many cases has been nothing more than a haphazard guess. What is needed, therefore, are categories which produce rules of grammar which can greatly reduce or eliminate the guessing and generate predictability. Such categories, we believe, can be found in the Mikasuki structure of selfhood and perception of reality which is lexically represented by a threefold system of pronouns which provide a particular epistemological "I," "Me," "Relational" orientation to life.

We will attempt to show that the "I" and "Me" aspects of Mikasuki selfhood manifest a positioning of ego both *in* and *over* nature forming emic categories of transcendence and nature, freedom and necessity. These categories form a matrix which serves as the grounds for all behavior and states of being. For the Mikasuki, this *transcendent-nature* matrix is the basic grid through which human existence is interpreted. It is, in the words of Benjamin Whorf (1956:252) a "*culturally ordained*" matrix embedded in the very structure of Mikasuki grammar by which the self "*not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationships and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.*" As a subconscious matrix it divides human existence into two distinct fields, (1) the field of freedom and moral law, and (2) the field of necessity and natural law. It is a matrix which forces ego to consider whether one's behavior is determined or free, controlled or non-controlled, moral or amoral, functioning in the field of freedom or in the field of cause and effect.

Presently, all descriptions of the Mikasuki pronominal system use case categories of agent, patient, and dative (Derrick-Mescua, 1980; Boynton, 1982a). Boynton (1982b) has also described the system in terms of ergativity.<sup>1</sup> This same agent, patient, and dative classification has also been used in describing the pronominal systems of other Muskogean languages, namely, Chickasaw and Choctaw (Munro-Gordon, 1982). The result of applying these agent-patient-dative categories to the Mikasuki pronominal system, and presumed to all Muskogean languages, has been, in the opinion of the author, tenuous generalizations rather than predictable rules. Boynton (1982b) recognizing the problem, noted that the Mikasuki pronoun system manifested a "*type of fluid (or unpredictable) subject marking*". Attempting to enhance predictability Boynton characterized the pronouns as having *ergative* and *split ergative* characteristics. Other linguists have noted the same problem of "fluidity". When applying agent-patient-dative categories to Chickasaw, Munro & Gordon say, "*the generalization most likely to stand is that Set I (pronouns) marks the agent of active verbs.*" Such statements appear to imply that Set I pronouns might also mark something other than agent. That something, we believe, is what social psychologists call *identity*, an identity which includes more than "I" as agent engaged in process or action, but "I" as a transcendent being distinct from nature.

Instead of the threefold linguistic categories of agent, patient, and dative, we believe the data rather reflects three distinct states of personal consciousness. These states are called the *transcendent-self* "I", the *affected-self* "I" or "me", and the *relational-self* "to me, at me, for me,

<sup>1</sup> A language is considered to have ergative characteristics when the pronoun sets for intransitive subject and transitive object are the same and the pronoun set for transitive subjects is different.

in me, part of me, etc." These three selfs, as the data shows, operate primarily in two distinct behavioral spheres, namely, nature and transcendence, or, necessity and freedom. In the field of freedom the *transcendent-self* is free to author and control action; in the field of nature, where freedom is absent, we find the *affected-self* or *object* to be constrained, moved, and compelled by the laws of nature and necessity. Using the threefold set classification of Munro and Gordon(1982) the conversion would be as follows:

	I Transcendent-self (agent)	II Affected-self/object (patient)	III Relational-self/object (dative)
1st per sg.	-le, -ele, -tay-	cha-, ach-	â-, am-, an-
2nd per sg.	-ech, -echka	chee-, eech-	chêê-, cheem-, cheen-
3rd per sg.	-ø	ø-, e-	êê-, em-, en-
1st per pl.	-eeka	po-, eepo-	pô-, pom-, pon-
2nd per pl.	-achka	chee-, eech-	chêê-, cheem-, cheen-
3rd per pl.	-ø	ø-, e- (-aach-, -eech-)	êê-, em-, en-

## I Description of the Three Selfs

The *transcendent-self*,<sup>2</sup> as manifested by pronoun Set I (-ele), reveals a state of mind in which ego is aware of his personal transcendence over nature and natural processes. It is an awareness that ego operates in the sphere of freedom, the sphere which makes purposeful human action and culture possible. Though the primary manifestation of the *transcendent self* to the Western mind comes across as *subject-as-agent* initiating action and controlling events, Set I pronouns also give ego a particular *identity*. This *identity* is broader than that used by social psychologists which limit identity primarily to an individual's role within a social situation. For such, *identity* has been defined as "the person's *location* in social life" (John Hewitt, 1976:112). A person has identity when "he is *situated*, that is, cast in the shape of a social object by acknowledgement of his participation or membership in a social relationship" (Gregory Stone, 1981). If, for example, a Mikasuki teenager hears a lecture from his uncle on the dangers of drinking alcohol he will "locate" or "situate" himself in the role of a moral human being capable of making a choice. In a similar way the lecturing uncle would "locate" his nephew in the same role.

For the Mikasuki, however, *identity* signifies more than being *positioned* or *situated* in a social situation. The particular identity embedded in the *transcendent-self* clearly "situates" and "locates" man *outside* and *above* nature. Man is more than a brute *in* nature. He is a transcendent, moral being who has freedom to act as a transformer of nature. It gives man as a specie characteristics which make him distinctly human. Without this *identity*, his role as a cultural being capable of initiating purposeful human action, moral or immoral, would be impossible.

<sup>2</sup> The term *transcendent-self* was chosen because it, in the opinion of the writer, best describes the domain of meaning embedded in pronoun set I. The term is not new. Richard Shweder (1985:195) speaks of the "transcendental 'I'" and says that "it is transcendental because it is more than a list of body parts or an assemblage of muscle and skin and bone. It is the 'I' that looks out at the world and out at the 'me' in the mirror.....that 'I', the dynamic center of initiative and free will, works in concert with one's senses, reason, imagination, memory, and body." Philosopher William James (1981 [1890]:196) postulated a "permanent Substance or agent called soul, a transcendent Ego, Spirit, which is behind the passing state of consciousness." This 'transcendent Ego' of William James is not the same as the impersonal, transcendent "Self" of Hinduism.

The *affected-self*, as manifested by pronoun Set II (cha-), reveals a state of mind in which ego is aware that the self, by virtue of its body, has a particular identity *in* nature. This identity includes: (a) an awareness that *in* nature there is no purposeful action, no controlling of events, no morality or accountability, mistakes yes, but no sin; and (b), a knowledge that this *affected-self*, because it possesses a body, is an object *in* nature which can be compelled, conditioned, and constrained by the laws of necessity, nature, and chance. The *affected-self* is acutely aware that there exists internal biological and external environmental forces which continually impinge upon selfhood, both compelling and restraining behavior. And finally (c), the *affected-self* possesses only attributes of nature, that is, attributes which are non-cultural. As such, the *affected-self* can function as the subject or object of transitive verbs or the subject of intransitive and stative verbs as long as the identity embedded *in* nature is not compromised. The *affected-self* is never the initiator and controller of events even though it may occur as subject of a transitive or intransitive verb.

The existence of a *transcendent-self* and *affected-self* as emic categories is also supported by the belief among older Mikasuki speakers that every individual has two spirits. According to some, one spirit sits on the right shoulder and one sits on the left. At death, the one self or "soul" (*enochkee*) goes into the grave with the body and evidently perishes. It succumbs to internal and external forces of nature and dies. The second spirit (*eshooloopee*) or *transcendent-self* continues existence by going to heaven. The *enochkee* is bound by material laws of nature and death; the *eshooloopee* by the non-material laws of freedom. The *enochkee* is provided by nature with particularity, a body which can be objectified. The *eshooloopee* is provided with a mind which gives man the capacity of self-awareness, self-objectification, and self-determination, the basis for discrete individuality and personality.

Set III (am-) *Relational-self* is an awareness that ego is involved in dyadic relationship of many types. The Mikasuki *relational-self*, it would appear, is positioned at the juncture of both freedom and necessity, transcendence and nature, having a foot in each camp. At the juncture of freedom and necessity the *relational-self* functions as interpreter, comparer, and evaluator of relationships and facts; on the other hand, it also serves as the object of relationships, marking part of the whole, indirect object, benefactive, subordinate, etc. Within the structure of Mikasuki selfhood the *relational-self* is not as significant as that of the *transcendent* and *affected-self* represented by the two spirits of man and will not be part of any further analysis in this paper. From here on the focus will be on the *transcendent* and *affected* selves as emic categories of Mikasuki consciousness.

## II The Affected-Self as Object in Nature

We will begin by first examining the aspect of Mikasuki selfhood which is "situated" *in* nature. In nature we have the *affected-self* manifested by the pronoun Set II (cha-), which has been described in Mikasuki grammar descriptions as patient. "*Patient prefixes*," we are told, "*are found as the subject of stative verbs and the object of active transitive verbs*" (Boynton, 1982:116). As a generalization this is true, but the following examples clearly reveal that Set II pronouns (cha-) are also to be found functioning as subjects of both transitive and intransitive verbs.

- (1) cha-feshähkom, I am breathing.<sup>3</sup>
- (2) ach-awöötom, I am vomiting.
- (3) cha-toʔonkom, I am coughing.
- (4) cha-ʔalätkom, I am snoring.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> - = nasalization signifying continuous action.

<sup>4</sup> ʔ = phoneme ʔ

- (6) chokfon cha-heechom, I see the rabbit.
- (7) cha-haklom, I hear.
- (8) cha-holwom, I smell it.
- (9) ampeekon cha-baanom, I need food.
- (10) okon cha-paashokom, I am thirsty for water.
- (11) efon cha-looshom, I forgot the dog.
- (12) esh-cha-faykom, I ran off the road in a vehicle.
- (13) sh-ach-atoolom, I tripped and fell because of something.
- (14) esh-cha-yenkom, I am getting dirty from something.

## List #1

What is significant about this particular aspect of Mikasuki selfhood is ego's awareness that he or she is a situated object *in nature* by virtue of possessing a body. This body can be compelled, stimulated, constrained, and conditioned internally by the laws of biology and externally by the laws of necessity and chance. For social psychologists who define selfhood in terms of process and object, the process here is purely mechanical. The *affected-self* knows no freedom; it exercises no control. So whether the *affected-self*, as seen in the above examples of list #1, is the object of a transitive verb or the subject of a transitive or intransitive verb, it is always the object of forces beyond its control. It manifests only non-purposive behavior or states of nature. Some of the internal and external forces impinging upon Mikasuki selfhood in nature are described under the following headings.

## 1. Stimulus and Response

In examples 1-5 we find the *affected-self* (cha-) functioning biologically under the impulses of nature and necessity. The *affected-self* (cha-), because it has a body, needs to breathe, vomit, cough, snore, and bleed when bruised or punctured. These responses are not mental but rather automatic responses to certain internal or external stimuli unless intentionally triggered, that is, one can willfully deceive others by intentionally coughing, vomiting, and snoring; intentionality, in this case, being signaled by using the *transcendent-self* pronoun Set I (-ele) instead. More such examples of the *affected-self* responding to stimuli are:

- cha-toloopkom, I bounced (implied: laws of physics).
- cha-tofonkom, I am coughing (implied: stimulus).
- cha-teeshkamom, I squint (implied: stimulus).
- cha-yasheknom, I grimace (implied: stimulus).
- cha-chompeelom, I defecate (implied: necessity).
- cha-choshowom, I urinate (implied: necessity).
- cha-chayhom, I am gaining height (implied: laws of nature).
- cha-tofkom, I spit (implied: necessity).
- cha-honchom, I belch (implied: stimulus).

## 2. Environment and Senses

The body is neurologically wired to certain sense organs which can be stimulated by sound, light, and odor. These endowments allow the *affected-self* to hear, see, and smell (examples 6-8 above). When these senses are stimulated, perception takes place. It is affected behavior. Nevertheless, this activity is expressed as I hear, I see, and I smell, which, when literally translated into English, comes across as controlled, initiated behavior. From the perspective of Mikasuki selfhood, however, the *affected-self* is merely indicating that his or her eyes, ears, and nose are OK, healthy, and functioning well in reference to external stimuli.

chokf-on cha-heechom, I (can) physically see the rabbit.  
rabbit-O 1sII - see

fosh-on cha-haklom, I (can) physically hear.  
bird - O 1sII - hear

empeek-on cha-holwom, I (can) physically smell the food.  
food - O 1sII - smell

Interestingly, the way the body is put together neurologically also permits the *transcendent-self* (-ele) of human consciousness to use and exercise control over these senses in the field of freedom. Within the structure of Mikasuki selfhood this is accomplished by merely switching from the *affected-self* (cha-) to the *transcendent-self* (-ele). The two selfs situated *in* and *over* nature are shown in the following examples.

#### In Nature: affected by stimuli

##### heechak<sup>5</sup>

cha-heechom, I (can) see.  
chee-heechom, You (can) see.  
ø-heechom, He (can) see.  
po-heeshchom, We-dl (can) see.  
po-heeshchaachom, We-pl (can) see.  
chee-heeshchom, You-dl (can) see.  
chee-heeshchaachom, You-pl (can) see.  
ø-heeshchom, They-dl (can) see.  
ø-heeshchaachom, They-dl (can) see.

#### In Transcendence: human intention

##### heechek

hëechom-ele, I am looking.  
hëechom-echka, You are looking.  
hëechom-ø, He/she is looking.  
hëechom-eeka, We are looking.  
-----  
hëechom-achka, You are looking.  
-----  
hëechom-ø, They are looking.  
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### 3. Necessity

In examples 9 of list #1, empeekon cha-baanom, 'I need food,' and 10, okon cha-pashokom, 'I am thirsty for water,' we have two examples where pronoun Set II (cha-) occurs as the subject of a transitive verb. Here the *affected-self* must have food and water, as well as shelter, air, and community, in order to survive. The self's body situated *in* nature is an object which must respond to the impulses of life. Such necessity is always expressed in Mikasuki by the word ø-cha-baanom, 'I need it,' never by saying ø-aklom-ele, 'I want it,' the latter manifesting human desire and man's transcendence *over* nature.

#### In Nature: necessity

##### ø-ebaanak

ø-cha-baanom, I need it  
ø-chee-baanom, You need it  
ø-e-baanom, He needs it

#### Transcendence over Nature: freedom

##### aklek

ø-aklom-ele, I want it (implied: desire, intention)  
ø-aklom-echka, You want it  
ø-aklom-ø, He wants it

<sup>5</sup> All verb roots take either an -a stem vowel or -ø stem vowel. We interpret the -a stem vowel as signifying the field of necessity or natural law, the -ø stem vowel as signifying the field of transcendent freedom and choice. Derrick-Mescua (1980) began dividing verbs into two major classes, namely, verbs affixed with -ø stem vowels and verbs affixed with stem vowel -a. West (1997) also made the same classification in his Mikasuki dictionary without any reference as to what the classification signified. Booker (1991) refers to the -a and -ø classification as a "case of fossilized morphology" which has an historical link to causative formations in the past. These vowels, we believe, can be conditioned not only phonologically, but also infrastructurally, i.e. by external environmental forces.

ø-po-bashnom, We-dl need it.	-----
ø-po-bashnaachom, We-pl need it.	ø-aklom-eeka, We want it.
ø-chee-bashnom, You-dl need it.	-----
ø-chee-bashnaachom, You-pl need it.	ø-aklom-achka, You want it.
ø-e-bashnom, They-dl need it.	-----
ø-e-bashnaachom, They-pl need it.	ø-aklom-ø, They want it.

#### 4. Chance

One element of human existence *in* nature is that we are all actors in fortuitous or incalculable happenings. It is part of the incalculable element of human behavior over which the self *in* nature has no control. From a Mikasuki perspective, the following are a few examples of things which can unpredictably happen to an individual. In such chance situations the *affected-self* pronoun of non-control is used.

cha-washaakom, I am lost (in the woods).  
 cha-looshom, I forgot it.  
 cha-taEaalom, I fell.  
 cha-shabaakom, I found it.  
 esh-cha-faykom, I detoured.

Again a contrast can be made between the *affected-self* *in* nature and the *transcendent-self* situated *above* nature, between the self which exercises control over events and the self which is a non-controlling participant in events. Therefore, to say 'I found it' may suggest control to the Western mind, but not to a Mikasuki. 'Finding' something is pure chance. One can volitionally search for something and hopefully 'find' or come across it, but never deliberately 'find' it. Thus the contrast between chance and control can be shown as follows:

In Nature: chance	Transcendence over Nature: control
<u>shabaakek</u>	<u>hapooyek</u>
cha-shabaakom, I found it.	hapooyom-ele, I search for it.
chee-shabaakom, You found it.	hapooyom-echka, You search for it.
ø-shabaakom, He found it.	hapooyom-ø, He searches for it.
po-shabashkom, We-dl found it.	-----
po-shabashkaachom, We-pl found it.	hapooyom-eeka, We search for it.
chee-shabashkom, You-dl found it.	-----
chee-shabashkaachom, You-pl found it.	hapooyom-achka, You-pl search for it.
ø-shabashkom, They-dl found it.	-----
ø-shabashkaachom, They-pl found it.	hapooyom-ø, They-pl search for it.

#### 5. Emotions

Most emotions of individuals, within the framework of Mikasuki selfhood, are experiences or psychological states induced, or triggered by some stimuli in nature. Like the senses, emotions are psychic and physical reactions subjectively experienced and expressed by pronoun Set II. Though they may imply some control in English since we tend to see emotions as feelings which should be brought under control, this does not appear to be the case in Mikasuki. As we shall see later, there exist at times tensions between nature and transcendence which need to be mediated, but if control over one's emotions does exist as one would expect, how it is manifested in the grammar is uncertain at the present time. Some of these physiological responses *in* nature are:

crying (heläyhhak) cha-heläyhhom, I am crying.  
 joy (afachkak) ach-afachkom, I am happy.  
 anger (weteehkak) en-cha-weteehkom, I am angry at him.  
 depression (hashaayak) esh-cha-hashaayom, I am depressed because of it.  
 embarrassment (maleefahkak) esh-cha-maleefahkom, I am embarrassed by it.  
 laughter (hayaakak) esh-en-cha-hayaakom, I laugh at his action/behavior.  
 scream (heehkak) cha-heehkom, I scream, yell.

## 6. Learning (ataafak)

Learning, from the perspective of Mikasuki selfhood, is deterministic. For a Mikasuki speaker one "learns" as a passive object. The acquisition of knowledge, language, motor skills, cultural rules and values is the result of a stimulus-response reaction within a social, technological, ecological, and economic environment. On the other hand "learning" cannot be completely deterministic, even for speakers of Mikasuki, so on the freedom side one can facilitate "learning" by *elem-ahaayek, 'teaching oneself.'* Thus again we have the following contrasts between nature and transcendence:

### In Nature: learning

#### ataafak

ach-ataafom, I learn.  
 eeche-taafom, You learn.  
 ø-ataafom, He learns.  
 po-atashfom, We-dl learn.  
 po-atashfaachom, We-pl learn.  
 eeche-tashfom, We-dl learn.  
 eeche-tashfaachom, We-pl learn.  
 ø-atashfom, They-dl learn.  
 ø-atashfaachom, They-pl learn.

### Transcendence over Nature: studying

#### elem-ahaayek

elam-ahaayom-ele, I teach myself.  
 elchem-ahaayom-echka, You teach yourself.  
 elem-ahaayom-ø, He teaches himself.  
 -----  
 elpom-ahaayom-eeka, We teach ourselves.  
 -----  
 elchem-ahaayom-achka, You teach yourselves.  
 -----  
 elem-ahaayom-ø, They teach themselves.

## 7. Form and Attributes of the Affected-Self in Nature

Besides the *affected-self* being constrained and affected by the laws of nature, the *affected-self*, because it is manifested in a body in nature, has both material form and physical attributes. It can be tall or short, dark or light, weak or strong, healthy or sick; but not good, kind, brave, and intelligent. The *affected-self* reflects the material attributes of nature. Transcendent, moral attributes must collocate with the *transcendent-self* pronoun Set I. A few examples of the *affected-self* possessing material attributes of nature are as follows:

cha-choob-ootom, I am big.  
 cha-hatkooshom, I am white,  
 cha-nookeepom, I am sick.  
 cha-keeshiknooshom, I am short.  
 cha-want-ootom, I am strong.  
 cha-nofoom-ootom, I am poor.

## 8. The Body and the External Environment

The above data, we believe, clearly points to an emic category of consciousness called the *affected-self*, a self which can neither initiate action, control behavior, achieve goals, nor act morally. The identity of the *affected-self* is grounded in a body having physical attributes embedded in nature, a body which can be affected by internal and external forces. Some of the internal and external variables which account for the non-purposive behavior of the *affected-self* are:

Internal Variables (Identity: biological body) + External Variables (social and environmental) -----> the Affected-Self (cha-)

-cause and effect  
-vital force  
-sense organs  
-emotions  
-drives  
-material form  
-physical attributes

-cause and effect  
-social environment  
-ecological  
-technological  
-educational  
-chance

↓  
non-purposive  
behavior

### III Human Transcendence over Nature

When the Mikasuki Set I (-ele) pronouns are described solely on the basis of agency or ego as "the participant which performs, effects, instigates, or controls the situation denoted by the predicated" (Foley & Van Valin (1984), a residue of unexplainable data, as has been previously stated, will always be the result. This is because the category of agency, controller, or actor which implies choice and purposive action is far too narrow a category to explain the total distribution in Mikasuki. Boynton (1982), for example, states that Set I (-ele) pronouns clearly mark "active involvement of the subject with transitive verbs and intransitive verbs of motion." Though this is true, the following examples demonstrate that Set I pronouns also serve as non-agent, non-controlling subjects of stative verbs as well as subjects of non-motion intransitive verbs. Such examples are:

- (1) awaykom-ele, I am married.
- (2) anchom-ele, I am dressed.
- (3) akashom-ele, I am shaving.
- (4) oköönchom-ele, I am fasting.
- (5) heeEom-ele, I act morally good or perfect.
- (6) tabaksh-oatom-ele, I am honest (lit. I am straight).
- (7) hamp-oatom-ele, I am bad.
- (8) holaashom-ele, I lie, speak an untruth.
- (9) apoatom-ele, I think.
- (10) aklom-ele, I know, want, hope.
- (11) apoonom-ele, I speak or communicate in language.
- (12) nakn-oatom-ele, I am a man.
- (13) tayk-oatom-ele, I am a woman.

List #2

Whereas with most verbs the -ele pronoun Set I functions as actor/agent initiating and controlling events, in the above list, these specific verbs reveal that the personal pronouns of Set I (-ele) have a particular identity which is transcendent in essence. This transcendent identity specifically locates man above nature as a rational, cultural, and moral being superior to or above nature. Features of this transcendent identity are:



### 1. Human culture

One of the primary features of the *transcendent-self* is that of culture. Unlike the rest of nature, the human specie has an open-ended set of cognitive standards and recipes for guiding one's course of behavior in life. For example, in the 13 examples of list #2, all behavior is specifically human. In nature there is no marrying, dressing, shaving, wearing of shoes, combing of hair, or fasting. Such acts are peculiar only to the human specie. In addition to these examples, there is an entire class of culture verbs (not described in this paper) which collocate only with the *transcendent-self* pronoun set. This enlightened state of culture and the raw state of nature can be seen in the following contrasts.

#### In Transcendence: modified

awaykom-ele, I am married.  
 ʔaakeepom-ele, I am groomed.  
 anchom-ele, I am dressed.  
 akashom-ele, I am shaved.  
 yaat-oatom-ele, I am a human.  
 ayooashom-ele, I am clean.

#### In Nature: unmodified

cha-len-ʔaamom, I am unmarried (lit. by myself).  
 cha-pahakwom, I am uncombed.  
 ach-anokoolom, I am naked.  
 cha-chosh-kootom, I am unshaved.  
 cha-honeechom, I am wild.  
 esh-cha-yeekom, I am dirty.

### 2. Self-determination

Man located in transcendence, the field of freedom, has the capacity to determine his own actions. In the field of transcendence the self is able to direct itself toward certain goals. The *transcendent-self* is viewed by Mikasuki society as having the power to cause effects. It is a power free, but not completely, of biological and infrastructural forces.<sup>6</sup> When such forces, however, impinge on selfhood and ego loses control of the situation, then human action is viewed as affected. In this case the *affected-self* pronoun *cha-* which implies non-willed behavior is used. A few contrasts between determined and self-determined behavior are:

#### In Transcendence: self-determination

aseenekon shayyom-ele, I drive the car.  
 eleepam-ele, I will die (by suicide).  
 sh-atoolom-ele, I tripped (intentional).  
 atoolaachom-ele, I caused it to fall.  
 okfēēpom-ele, I am getting wet (intentional).

#### In Nature: determination, fate

aseenekon esh-cha-faykom, I detour the car.  
 ch-eleepam, I will die (natural cause).  
 sh-ach-atoolom, I tripped on it (accidently).  
 ach-atoolom, I fell (implied: accidently).  
 ach-okfēēpom, I am getting wet (accidently).

### 3. Conscience, Morality, and Moral Law

Among the many features of human transcendence over nature is the presence of conscience, the self's awareness of some moral law which condemns or excuses one's behavior. Examples 5,6,7, and 8 of list #2 are all examples of the *transcendent-self* judging one's self against such a standard. When one says *heefom-ele* 'I am morally good,' or *holaashom-ele*, 'I lie,' the presence of the transcendent pronoun *-ele* indicates not only that the speaker is a free agent of good and bad behavior but that the speaker is also aware of a transcendent, moral standard, not necessarily his own, which is his or her mission in life to realize. When, however, the moral judgement of conscience is switched to judgements in nature, judgements dealing with material and physical realities, then the affected pronoun is used. Therefore, in saying *Cha-chahnom*, 'I am physically well,' one is expressing a material, amoral proposition rather than a transcendent, moral

<sup>6</sup> By "infrastructural forces" we mean existing economic, ecological, technological, and environmental forces like draught, war, famine, earthquakes, the drying up of the everglades, etc. which impinge upon the individual and society. Man in his struggle for survival will attempt to overcome or modify such forces so as to be "free." The leading proponent of infrastructural determinism is anthropologist Marvin Harris.

proposition. In this case one uses the pronoun *cha-*; not *-ele*. Good and evil, sin and virtue, therefore, are not located in nature or the environment, but rather in the transcendent field of freedom. The essence of the *transcendent-self* is freedom, freedom to choose and act responsibly, sinfully or virtuously. The contrast between transcendence and nature, moral behavior versus amoral behavior, can be seen in the following examples:

**In Transcendence: a moral standard In Nature: a material standard**

*heeʔ-ootom-ele*, I am morally good.

*tabaksh-ootom-ele*, I am honest (straight)

*shatapahkom-ele*, I sinned (volitional).

*cha-heeʔ-ootom*, I am (physically) OK, handsome.

*an-tabaksh-ootom*, Part of me (leg/arm) is straight.

*cha-shatapahkom*, I made a mistake (unintentional).

**4. Rationality, desire and intention.**

Two more important features which give identity to the *transcendent-self* are rationality (*apoftek*), and will, desire, and intention (*aklek*). Both of these verb roots occur only with the transcendent pronoun Set I, for only humans think, reason, and make rational judgements about the future. Only humans can form intentions which can be willed into controlled action. In nature the brute is determined by heredity and forces from without, things over which it has no control. Man, from a Mikasuki perspective, when functioning in the sphere of freedom determines his actions from within. This contrast between freedom and necessity, control and non-control, nature and transcendence can again be seen in the following examples:

**In Transcendence: control, intention In Nature: non-control, necessity**

*apoftek*

*apofotom-ele*, I rationalize or think

*apofotom-eeka*, We rationalize or think.

*palaakak*

*cha-toolom*, I fall.

*po-toshlom We-di* fall.

*po-toshlaachom*, We-pl fall.

*aklek*

*Okon aklom-ele*, I want/hope for water.

*Okon aklom-eeka*, We want/hope for water.

*ebaanak*

*Okon cha-baanom*, I need water.

*Okon po-bashnom*, We-di need water.

*Okon po-bashnaachom*, We-pl need water.

**5. Self-consciousness**

Another aspect of man's transcendent identity is self-consciousness. In nature there is consciousness; in transcendence there is self-consciousness. Mikasuki selfhood distinguishes itself from nature and the brute by its capacity to stand outside oneself and make oneself one's own object. This capacity for self-consciousness is reflected in the use of the the reflective pronoun *elam* 'myself' which collocates primarily with the *transcendent-self* pronoun Set I (-*ele*). In Mikasuki one is not only conscious of his own acts and states, but is uniquely aware that the *transcendent-self* is the subject of these acts and states. Man is the only creature who can do this. In Mikasuki, various behavioral characteristics of the *transcendent-self* are generally described in terms of what one can do to oneself as object. Some examples are:

*self-control* = *elam-aybom-ele*, I forbid myself.

*independence* = *elam-aashom-ele*, I help myself.

*studying* = *elam-ahaayom-ele*, I teach myself.

*self-confidence* = *elam-tanaalom-ele*, I rest upon myself.

## 6. Love, a transcendent act or economic necessity?

The word *love* (anokaachek) has an -e stem vowel manifesting the field of freedom in which the *transcendent-self* functions. However, when informants give the verb form for *I love*, they will most likely say *ach-anokaachom*. Instead of the transcendent -ele one would expect to find with -e stem verbs, the affected pronoun *ach-* is used instead. Why the shift? The use of the affected pronoun *ach-* reveals that such *love* is not grounded in freedom where worldly possessions are freely used for the good of others, but in the contingencies of nature, namely, economic necessity. Here we have an example of infrastructural pressures of economics and human survival coming to bear on what we as Westerners would assume to be a transcendent, unselfish act. Socio-economic pressures have probably shifted the act of love from being a transcendent act grounded in freedom to an economic act of friendship grounded in political necessity.

Politically, the Mikasuki are organized on the basis of matrilineal clans. One's primary allegiance or "love" belongs to clan, kinfolks, and family to whom one has economic and social obligations. Worldly possessions as a rule are not to be used for the benefit of outsiders, but rather insiders. In this case, the use of the *affected-self* pronoun implies that the referent is related to ego and that ego is obligated to them in some way. On the other hand, when the object referent is an outsider or enemy where benefits to self are non-existent, such love would naturally have to be transcendent. In this case, when my language helper was asked how to say, *I love my enemy*, he immediately switched over and used the *transcendent-self* pronoun -ele.

In another case, when the object of love was shifted from enemy to wife's brother or sister's husband, my language helper again used the *transcendent-self* -ele pronoun. Within the Mikasuki social order, loving one's brother-in-law or sister's husband is probably analogous to loving one's enemy since such individuals are competitors with the wife's husband or sister's brother for the allegiance of a woman who is both wife and sister. This interchange between the affected and transcendent pronouns reflects, we believe, a social order in which the primary relation of the extended or nuclear family is not that of husband-wife, but probably that of an intimate sister-brother, a relation grounded in the economic realities of a matrilineal clan. This shift from transcendent freedom of choice to economic necessity is found in the following examples:

### In Nature: economic necessity

am-alaakon ach-anokaachom, I love my clansmen (implied: economic benefits).

cha-efon ach-anokaachom, I love my dog (implied: economic benefits).

cha-halkon ach-anokaachom, I love my wife (implied: economic benefits).

### In transcendence: freedom of choice

ach-achonaakon anokaachom-ele, I love my enemy (implied: some social, economic cost).

cha-halke-enlokon anokaachom-ele, I love my wife's brother.

cha-fonke ee-naakon anokaachom-ele, I love my sister's husband.

## 7. Accountability

Implied in the emic category of *transcendent-self* functioning as a moral being positioned in the field of freedom is the notion of responsibility and accountability. The *transcendent-self* by its very nature will be held accountable by society for good and bad choices. The *affected-self*, functioning in the field of natural law or mechanistic necessity, obviously cannot be held accountable since neither choice nor control is a possibility. Accountability is an attribute of freedom. With this absence of accountability in nature there is therefore plenty of personal motivation to shift dysfunctional and disruptive social behavior occurring in the field of freedom to the field of necessity. In nature, where one's behavior is viewed as being affected, how can one be held accountable?

External pressures upon the self to adhere to a stated or unstated moral code have again, we believe, led individuals to *reposition* themselves from accountability in transcendence to non-accountability in nature. Such *repositioning* of the self can be found in such behavior as getting drunk (*hakbom*) and *sinning* (*shatapahkom*). Informants, instead of collocating such behavior with the transcendent pronoun Set I (-ele) as would be expected, generally prefer to collocate these actions with the nature pronoun Set II (cha-) which reflects either affected behavior or a loss of control on the part of ego. Of importance, however, is the fact that each of these two actions receives some disapprobation from society, providing the motivational impetus for individuals to reposition themselves in nature in order to avoid blame and save face.

Though informants prefer to collocate *hakbom* with the affected pronoun Set I (cha-) they will collocate it with Set I (-ele) when choice and accountability are in focus. Thus if one wants to hold one accountable, one can accuse someone of going out and getting drunk and drive home the point that such an act was grounded in choice by positioning the individual in the field of freedom by using the *transcendent-self* pronoun -*echka*. One would therefore say *haakbeepom-echka*, 'You got drunk (by choice)'; not *chee-haakbeepom*, 'You got drunk (by accident).'

#### From transcendent freedom----->

implied: accountability

haakbeepom-ele, I got drunk (implied: guilt)

haakbeepom-eeka, We got drunk (implied: guilt)

#### to Nature

implied: environmental conditioning

cha-haakbeepom, I got drunk (no guilt)

po-haakbeepom, We got drunk (no guilt)

In similar fashion one "sins" in transcendent freedom and is therefore held accountable. On the other hand, one can "make mistakes" in nature where accountability is zero. To avoid blame one can merely *reposition* oneself from the field of freedom to the field of nature.

#### From transcendent freedom----->

shatapahkom-ele, I sin (volitional).

shatapahkom-eeka, We sin (volitional).

#### to Nature

cha-shatapahkom, I made a mistake.

po-shatapahshookom, We two made a mistake.

po-shatapahshookaachom, We-pl made a mistake.

### 8. Speaking and Believing, Language and Faith.

Because man is able to say *apoomom-ele*, 'I speak,' and *akaashamom-ele*, 'I believe,' he is able to both understand and transform the world in which he lives. Because man speaks (*apoomom*), he, in the words of Levi-Strauss, functions as "meaning-giver" and name-giver of the features of nature. Because he believes (*akaashamom*), he is a cultural transformer of nature. Without faith, that is, man's ability to believe and expect, there would be no grounds for purposive action. In the words of economist Von Mises, the prerequisite for purposeful human action is "the expectation (i.e. faith) that purposeful behavior has the power to remove or alleviate the felt uneasiness. In the absence of this condition (faith) no action is feasible. Man must yield to the inevitable. He must submit to destiny i.e. determinism (1949:14). Without language and faith there would be no *emic*, Mikasuki category of *transcendent-self* positioned above nature. Both of these verbs take -e stem vowels and the *transcendent-self* pronoun set I.

### 9. Human Uniqueness

Propositions 12 and 13 of list #2 are propositions of human identity. They are statements of being, not of action, control, or self-determination. To say either *Naki ootom-ele*, 'I am a man,' or *tayk-ootom-ele* 'I am a woman' happens to be a metaphysical declarations of position, namely, that men and women are transcendent beings situated above nature. When, however, the material attributes of the self in nature are in focus, then pronoun Set II(cha-) manifesting the *affected-self* is used. This change in focus from transcendence to nature can be seen in the following examples:

**In Transcendence**implied: humanity, culture

tayk-ootom-ele, I am a woman.

Mikasuki-k-ootom-ele, I am a Mikasuki.

nakn-ootom-ele, I am a man.

chek-omm-ootom-ele, I am a house-maker.

**In Nature**implied: material form and attributes

cha-cha-hy-ootom, I am tall.

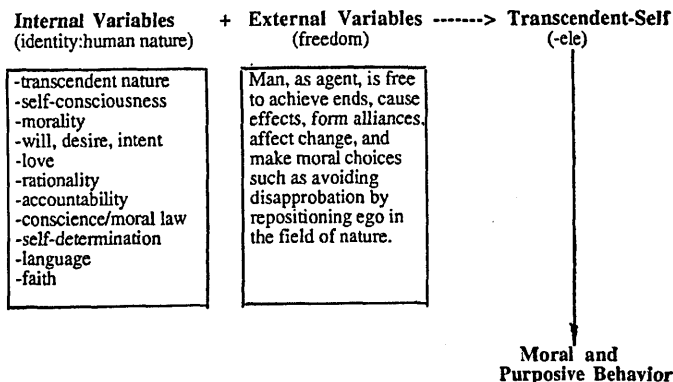
cha-choob-ootom, I am big.

cha-nakn-oosh-ootom, I am an old man.

Being a man, woman, Mikasuki, or person implies both transcendence and culture. Now from an anthropological perspective the Mikasuki proposition *tayk-ootom-ele*, 'I am a woman' flies directly in the face of the structuralist's proposition in anthropology which says that "*female is to male as nature is to culture*." Contrary to the structuralist's proposition which classifies women under "nature" and men under "culture", the Mikasuki structure of selfhood, functioning within a matrilineal clan system where women control property, classifies both male and female as cultural beings separate from nature. Women are neither inferior nor superior to men; they are equals. The notion that women should be classified under nature and men under culture is foreign to a Mikasuki structure of reality. Both are viewed as transcendent beings capable of creatively directing, within limits, the forms and vitalities of nature.

**10. Human Nature in Freedom**

The evidence above, we believe, clearly points to an emic category of consciousness called the *transcendent-self*. This self receives its transcendent identity from specific states of being and cultural activities both of which transcend nature. This transcendent identity plus human agency in the field of freedom are what makes purposeful and moral human action possible within the framework of Mikasuki selfhood. Because man is a transcendent being he is a free moral agent capable of planning, willing, and initiating action in accordance with standards of right and wrong. He is even free to escape social disapprobation and hopefully save face by repositioning himself in the field of nature by shifting pronoun sets. In the following chart we see how purposive behavior is grounded in these complementary aspects of the Mikasuki *transcendent-self*.



### Conclusion

The data, we believe, supports the emic categories of transcendence and nature. Similar categories have been used by anthropologists (Levi Strauss, 1963; Douglas, 1967) and philosophers (Benoist, 1974:24) to explain the essence of human existence. For such scholars the essence of *being* is found in a *culture-nature* matrix, a matrix which many have assumed to be the very foundation of Western metaphysics.<sup>7</sup> In this case, human existence begins with man positioned in nature with nature generating a categorizing system homologous with itself. The *transcendent-nature* matrix, on the other hand, paradoxically positions man both *inside* and *outside* of nature. It has divided human existence into two distinct fields, (1) the field of freedom which makes human culture possible, and (2) the field of necessity and natural law. It is a matrix which forces ego to consider whether one's behavior is determined or free, controlled or non-controlled, moral or amoral, functioning in the field of freedom or in the field of cause and effect. From this perspective, man is neither totally free to act nor is he totally determined by the impulses of nature because man, according to Mikasuki mythology, has two spirits to guide him, a transcendent spirit (esholoopee) sitting on one shoulder and a material spirit (enochkee) sitting on the other.

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<sup>7</sup> Philosopher Jean-Marie Benoist sees this juxtaposition of culture against nature simply as a Western phenomena going back to Plato. "Western knowledge since the times of the Greeks," he says, "has always posed, and tried to solve, the question of relationship between culture and nature. Is culture rooted in nature, imitating it or emanating directly from it, or, on the contrary, is culture at variance with nature, absolutely against it since its origin and involved in the process of always transforming nature? The matrix of this opposition between culture and nature is the very matrix of Western metaphysics."

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